

AUBADE

Sometimes when my love and I lay senseless
in the woolpack of sleep, I recall the *coma*: nebulous cloud
of ice and dust sublimating the nucleus of a comet—

and it becomes the fuzz of a workday burned up in commuter traffic
or lost in the Oort Cloud of meetings. When my partner
steps out for work, I get a twinge of loss. Then comes

the plush feeling of domesticity, that infinite fish turning inside me.
On the same night as the Charleston Church Shooting,
I listen to a scientist's recording of a plant dying of thirst.

It sounds like the first drops of rain striking an air conditioner,
then a torrential downpour. In America, it's possible
for a white supremacist to sit in a prayer meeting for an hour,

then kill nine black parishioners. The living ask:
Where do we go to get free? Where do we go to live?
The human heart weighs only as much as a can of Coke.

BEFORE *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*

When I read a poem
that fucks me up
with its gorgeousness
I don't want to be the poet.
I want to be the poem.
I'm sorry for bumping
into your mom, Kid.
It was summer in NYC.
Little white face, you
craned back your head
to face the accuser.
In the afterlife, I'll be
a poem. Just a plain
sheet of typing paper
bludgeoned with ink.
The one that captures
the tar-green tenderness
in your eyes, hardened
with daughterly outrage.

BLUE DOG

Mid-sentence while teaching
a freshman seminar, a stranger

in a blue dog costume enters.
Blue Dog paces in eerily

without saying a word—
mimes his threadbare mitts

for us to carry-on. I search
the shadowbox of mesh

beneath its battered plastic eyes
for any indication of what's next.

Where an ID card should rest,
an empty plastic case swings.

When Blue Dog speaks,
his voice is crushed gravel:

*One time I buried a bone.
I buried a bone, then I dug it up.*

A part of me leaves my body.
When it's over, he walks out.

Five days later, an Oregon community
college student shoots his English teacher

and nine others. The gunman says,
I've wanted to do this for years.

ON MY BACK

After Leeanne Maxey

American insults lie in the body.
They flail across the knife.
I study the green air plants

threaded across a chain link fence—
the matchsticks of your life
startled clean and blazing.

Observe a palate of flesh tones
disappear into starless denim:
reduction its own form of bloodshed.

So much depends upon the landscape
before its wildness leeches away.
The viewer's assumptions thrown

back at her. As if to say,
my queerness is the most
natural thing I inhabit.